

Jo Bonner

THE WASHINGTON CYBER REPORT

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CALENDAR TIGHT FOR REMAINDER OF YEAR



With only 15 working weeks until its target adjournment and election-year partisanship already at a fever pitch, it will be difficult for the 108th Congress to complete much beyond "must pass" appropriations bills. However, here is a rundown of some major issues that may be considered:

Fiscal 2005 budget resolution: The House and Senate so far have failed to strike a deal on budget enforcement rules, but they have strong incentives to work out a compromise. Adopting a budget would make it easier for Congress to pass a tax cut bill this year - and to enact legislation needed to increase a statutory cap on government debt.

Appropriations: The spending committees are preparing to get started on moving the 13 FY 2005 bills. However, with lawmakers eager to end the 108th Congress in a timely manner, there is widespread expectation that many spending measures will be wrapped into an omnibus bill. These bills must be passed in some form to avoid a shutdown of government operations.

Surface transportation: The House and Senate have each passed bills to renew federal highway and mass transit programs for six years, but the administration says both are too expensive. A compromise that avoids a veto and satisfies local communities is possible by summer.

Defense authorization: The House Armed Services plans to mark up its draft bill May 12. The Senate Armed Services plans its markup sometime in May. A major issue is whether Congress will try to force the Pentagon to enlarge the size of the armed forces.

Internet taxes: A permanent ban on taxing Internet access has encountered controversy in the Senate over whether the prohibition should protect only consumers or also companies that run the Internet backbone. Senate floor action is possible soon. The House passed its bill last fall.

Broadcasting indecency: The House has passed a crack-down bill. Two provisions in the Senate version, expected on the floor soon, pose problems: language to delay FCC rules on media ownership by a year and to open the door to FCC regulation of television violence.

1165TH EXTENDED IN IRAQ

During the past several days, we've received a mixed bag of news regarding our troops currently serving in Iraq. On the one hand, we were thankful for the safe return of the men and women of the 161st Area Support Medical Battalion after one year of service stationed at camps in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Dubai.

However, just a few days later we received word that the 1165th Military Police Company, based in Fairhope, Alabama, had received an extension of 120 days on their current tour in Iraq. It goes without saying that the families of the members of the 1165th are extremely disappointed, and I too regret this news and the additional stress it is placing on those serving in Iraq and those at home in south Alabama.

I had the opportunity to meet many of the members of this unit during my trip to Iraq last December and see first-hand the conditions under which they operate each day. I've no doubt the unit has been extended because of the exceptional contributions they are making to the military effort in Iraq.

However, no amount of pride will ever outweigh the need for the men and women of the 1165th to be reunited with their parents, spouses, and children. As such, I have contacted officials with the Alabama National Guard, the Department of the Army, and other officials with the Pentagon to obtain more definitive information on the unit's expected demobilization date and the reasons for the extension.

Let me assure everyone that my staff and I will do all we can to provide support to the family members here in south Alabama, and I will be providing additional information as soon as it becomes available.



I was so pleased to have the opportunity to visit with members of the 1165th during my trip to Iraq this past December.

FIRST DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH

Clear Channel Radio, UPS, Girl Scouts of America and Colonial Bel Air Mall

I am very proud to have participated in the recent "Treats for Troops" program sponsored by Clear Channel Radio, UPS, the Girl Scouts of America, and Colonial Bel Air Mall. This event was a great opportunity for those of us in south Alabama to send a little taste of home to our service members overseas. Individuals were able to purchase boxes of Girl Scout cookies to be sent to deployed military personnel stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas in the Middle East.



My daughter, Lee, and I were happy to get on the radio and encourage listeners to come out in support of our troops. Lee is a Brownie in Troop 74.

Thanks to the hard word of those at Clear Channel Radio, UPS, the Girl Scouts, and Colonial Bel Air Mall, over 2000 boxes of cookies were purchased and sent (compliments of UPS) overseas. Please see below the messages of thanks my office and Clear Channel received from several of our units:

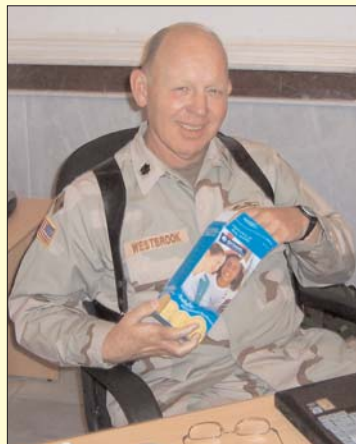
I just wanted to drop a note to Congressman Bonner and all of those at home who have been so very supportive of our unit, as we carry out our mission here in Iraq. We received the Girl Scout Cookies last week and distributed them to the soldiers. The cookies of course, were a tremendous hit. I can't begin to tell you how much the soldiers appreciate the thoughts and support we have gotten throughout our entire mobilization. The troops are all doing well and serving our country proud. I could not ask them to do any more, nor any better as they continue to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq.

*God Speed and God Bless,
LTC Scott F. Gelding
Commander "Team 711th"*

Thank you and your staff so much for the cookies. We received them yesterday and have been distributing them to grateful soldiers in the 1st Armored Division and 350 CACOM.

*Your friend always,
LTC Johnny Abruscato
350 CACOM*

Right: A member of the 350 CACOM smiles as he opens a box of Trefoils.

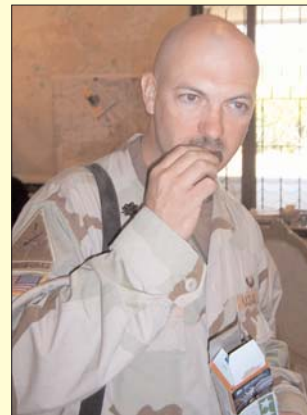


On behalf of the soldiers of the 161st Area Support Medical Battalion out of the Mobile area I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your recent shipment of Girl Scout cookies that I received on behalf of my soldiers in the battalion. The listeners from TK101, Cool 107, 95KSJ, 96.1 The Rocket, Lite Mix 99.9 and WNTM donated the cookies through the Girl Scouts of America. Your generosity and kindness of sending all the cookies is much appreciated and brings us a little bit of home that we all miss very much. Please relay my appreciation to all your kind listeners from each of the stations and tell them we did receive the cookies and deeply appreciate the support. We support and defend our great nation with our lives and our time. We proudly serve and sacrifice that others such as your many listeners may have the freedom they daily enjoy. My best wishes to each of your listeners and thanks again.

Best Regards

LTC Charles R. Griffin

*161st Area Support Medical Battalion
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait*



***Other
members
of the 350
CACOM
enjoy their
treats.***



TOWN MEETING WRAP-UP

My staff and I recently concluded a successful round of fourteen district town hall meetings. In each town we visited, the turnout was sizeable, and the comments and opinions each of you shared were very valuable.

In order to be an effective representative for the First District, it is important that I always stay in touch with the views of the 635,300 people I represent. While I understand not everyone can attend these town meetings, I certainly appreciate those who were able to take time out of their schedules to come visit with us. You can each be assured that I took away some valuable information that I will keep in mind as pertinent legislation is considered in the coming weeks.



I was proud to honor dedicated employees of the Citronelle Convalescent Center with Congressional certificates during my town meeting in Citronelle.

